

ON THE ROAD PhD seminar (Barcelona, Jan 25-26 2016)

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1. Title

Spatial Configuration of Collective Spaces within Forming Dynamics: The Relation Between Urban Transformation and Infrastructure in the Case of the Plaza de las Glorias Catalanas, Barcelona.

2. Resume

The PhD-project investigates the spatial configuration of collective spaces in cases in which infrastructures propels urban transformation. The focus is on the meaning, character, spatial and programmatic qualities of these spaces as outcomes of urban processes that are constantly fluctuating. Aiming to overcome dialectic approaches on (in)formality still embracing their attributes, it studies the complex spatial forming dynamics of urban streetscapes, namely the changing production of nontraditional conjugations of spaces, boundaries and territories.

Collective space -as the category tied to the city as an ever changing experience- raises many potentialities, contradictions and conflicts and by understanding its implications, meanings and characters, we can foster new ways of conceiving urban realities. Collective spaces are not restricted to certain morphologies or ownerships, but defined by certain qualities (Scheerlinck, 2012-2013): they are co-inhabited by different actors that relate to each other and to space itself in non-hierarchical cultural-driven manners (Hillier and Hanson, 1984; García Canclini, 1999; Lefebvre, 1974; Latour, 2005, Foucault, 2004 [1977-1978]). Within this frame, unexpected configurations of proximity and territoriality, permeability and boundaries emerge. These configurations will be investigated by means of specific parameters, measuring the levels in which material, domain, use, infrastructural edges and interfaces manifest in time; and mapping the ways in which this elements are exposed, shared, and separated materially, visually and symbolically, along with the in-between gradients, overlapping and autonomous states.

Particular urban settings, such as areas of programmatic vacancy, infrastructure nodes or metropolitan peripheries (both around or within the city), put in evidence the tensions and conflicts inherent to the current production of the city, and can ultimately act as intermittent buffer zones capable of absorbing contradictory forces, as in the case of *Plaza de las Glorias Catalanas*. These tensions get stressed when different spheres, namely the state apparatus, economic market actors, societal groups and cultural relations (Arroyo, 2011) deploy strategies for territorial demarcation following particular logics. Some of these logics are considered stable or institutionalized, among them, urban structures (fabric, grid, axes, plot layouts), infrastructures (roads, railways), urban codes, buildings aggregates, public facilities and projects. They have been the subjects of study of urbanists for centuries, but are now acquiring new connotations that are far from being fully understood, due to the high level of complexity in which they are produced and manifested. Others are rather emergent, unstable, spontaneous, and incremental; they include appropriation and initiatives, constant negotiations, building transformations, temporary structures and uses. They also generate material and symbolic outcomes, and furthermore, they have the capacity to resignify the traditional elements by becoming strong urban forces. This PhD-project is not interested in confronting them as antithesis, calling them formal or informal (depending on their level of legality, coherence or establishment), but in studying then in the hybridized manners in which they actually exist (Latour, 2005¹), aiming to articulate the conceptual construction "Forming Collective Streetscapes". This is pursued by focusing on space and urban matter, and their forming dynamics, on the manner in which fluctuant spatial element manifest, based on different parameters that vary in time, in non-hierarchized morphogenetic processes

The initial hypothesis is that understanding the spatial configuration of collective spaces when taking into account the forming dynamics of production of space in time, has intrinsic capacities to upgrade the design of architecture and urban projects to innovative techno-cultural practices in a broad spectrum of

¹ "Hybrids are organisms that operate at multiple levels of domain, complexity and intensity. They can only be understood by extending their networks into wider directions and by moving around them." LATOUR, Bruno. Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory. Oxford University Press, UK, 2005.

tools and approaches. This is particularly urgent due to the novel hyper-complex conditions of contemporary urban realities verified from a theoretical and experiential point of view.² These conditions confront architects and designers with the obsolescence of their methodological tools that still respond to traditional conceptions of cities in balance. The primary role that the urbanized world plays in terms of social and environmental (e)quality, and the critical stage that it is now reaching (as widely claimed by agencies such as the ONU), demand designers to adapt and upgrade the ways they understand and intervene in urban contexts, if they intent to keep a relevant position in the configuration of the built environment (especially after decades of experimentation that struggles to endure in the current post-crisis situation).

Therefore, the objective of this PhD-project is to address the following questions:

- Are the settings in which urban tensions get stressed, platforms for understanding non-traditional conjugations of spaces, boundaries and territories, relating to streetscapes and infrastructures in contemporary urban transformation processes? With a special focus on cases in which the qualities of collective spaces are overwritten, can these procedures be altered?
- What are the spatial meanings, characters, qualities and forming dynamics that collective spaces acquire in processes lead by infrastructures? Are the proposed parameters an innovative way of understanding urban configurations?
- Is Forming Collective Streetscapes a suitable conceptual construction to articulate these elements? How and in what sense? What are the explorative tools, mapping techniques, analytical and design resources based on Forming Collective Streetscapes that bring up capacities to upgrade the design of architecture and urban projects?

3. Index

Brief Introduction and Methodology Framework: Theme and Research Questions. Brief comment on what is implicated in **spatial configuration of collective spaces** within **forming dynamics**, in the frame of the relation between **urban transformation** and **infrastructure**, and particularly to start articulating the conceptual construction **forming collective streetscapes**. A conceptual review is aimed at understanding the connotations of the terms used in this PhD-project and ultimately push them further in theoretical and practical terms. *Estimated time: 5 minutes.*

Methodology I: Glòries Timeline, Revisiting Glòries' Conformation and Transformation Process: Defining the relevancy of the *Glòries* case-study and reflecting on the timeline, not aiming at disentangle the complexity of the case-study itself, but at using this complexity to deploy a novel research methodology and approach. Short introduction on the case of *Plaza de las Glorias Catalanas* (in Barcelona, Spain; shortly *Glòries*). Use of the case to deploy this approach aiming to unveil the complex convergence of streetscapes and urban infrastructures that take place in contemporary transformations. This infrastructure-based open space once exposing a variety of logics, processes and spatial configurations linked to a long-lasting complex transformation process is now being turned into an urban complex that simplifies, thus dismisses that variety. Situated at the fringe of 4 officially determined administrative districts (*barrios*), *Glòries'* first aspirational character was determined by Cerdà, when conceiving it as 'the centre' of his extension plan, meeting point of prominent urban axes (*Avenida Diagonal*, *Gran Vía de las Cortes Catalanas* and *Avenida Meridiana*), which was actually to be achieved via an intricate morphological alteration of the plan's morphological tools triggered by the infrastructural preexistences (train lines). The complexity of the site manifested repeatedly along history, during moments of diverse interest by different actors. As a consequence the area was inconsistently developed and due to its actual residual character, it became the prime destination for infrastructural elements that in turn changed their significance. On the other hand, the history of constant redefinition and disarticulated interventions in a long period of time empowered the emergence of a vivid collective urban streetscape, full of rich spatial configurations and a great variety of morphological and programmatic manifestations. Currently, an undergoing transformation process includes the relocation of major infrastructural elements in underground levels (the construction of a tunnel) and the reclaim of open spaces for defined urban uses to be achieved by means of a new metropolitan park, a series of

² DE LANDA, 2006, DELEUZE, G, DERRIDA, J, 1987, among others.

dominant architectural objects, and the programmatic saturation (that paradoxically responds to long standing demands of public facilities that find room at the back-side of the adjacent districts). This case gathers what is considered to be the most advanced repertoire for urban transformations tools, and it exhibits how it gets weakened when going through a spatio-material simplification process that dismisses mismatching existent qualities and discourses, leaving little space to alternative urban processes. On top of that, the process has been properly documented in isolated stages (key moments are usually celebrated), and nowadays the amount of sources and studies made on this area are overwhelming. But, paradoxically, the case was never studied from a simultaneous diachronic/synchronic perspective that considers a broader time frame and looks at the transitions and spatial outcomes in the in-between moments for other purposes than the (re)definition of the area itself. Including this glance, apart for avoiding any pretention of adding to the local *Glòries* debate, enables us to address the fluctuations of the spatial configurations in an innovative way, ultimately offering elements to articulate a discourse for an alternative way of conceiving urban elements, based on a novel relation between infrastructure and collective spaces in a broader sense. *Estimated time: 5 minutes.*

Methodology II: Deploying Existing Explorative Tools: Brief comment on this methodological step. The methodology is set to study the spaces, infrastructures and buildings under these new conceptual frame and parameters, by embracing notions of proximity, permeability, accessibility, among others, as gradients and an upgraded relation between built and open spaces as creative adjacencies by focusing on the interactions between edges and interfaces. Complementing and challenging the research line on Streetscapes Territories developed by Prof. Dr. Kris Scheerlinck at KU Leuven, the project aims to register, map, develop insights, discuss and push forward a transfer process between actual urban phenomena and potential disciplinary resources from a theoretical, strategic and design point of view. For achieving this, preliminary tests are performed, deploying traditional tools such as classical urban form analytical tools³, space syntax tools, advanced urban analysis tools (Barcelona School's UPE-methodology) and the catalogue of Streetscape Territories techniques. Reflecting on their suitability regarding design theory is crucial. Graphic examples on *Glòries*. *Estimated time: 3 minutes.*

Methodology III: Forming Collective Streetscapes, a New Explorative Tool?: This PhD-project aims to develop Forming Collective Streetscapes as a new explorative tools that includes conceptual, analytical, explorative, and design theory potential. Verification of its relevancy within the new theoretical frame on contemporary relation between urban transformation and infrastructure, in order to generate a methodological break through triggered by the framework, the use of the Intensity Timeline and the outcome of Existent Explorative Tools, along with a series of tests to push the tool further. Investigation by means of specific parameters, measuring the levels in which material, domain, use, infrastructural edges and interfaces manifest in time; and mapping the ways in which this elements are exposed, shared, and separated materially, visually and symbolically, along with the in-between gradients, overlapping and autonomous states. Graphic examples on *Glòries* of:

0. From Formal/Informal to Forming Dynamics.
1. Forming Collective Streetscapes:
 - a. Transformation Moments and In-between Moments
 - b. Basic Elements
 - c. Complex Elements: Core
 - d. Complex Elements: Interaction – Interfaces
 - e. Spatiality: Level of accessibility - Materiality/Perception: Level of permeability

Estimated time: 7 minutes.

Preliminary Conclusions and Further Steps

Can Forming Collective Streetscapes ultimately become a Conceptual and Design Theory Input? Open question to the expert panel and preliminary thoughts to move on into strategies of spatial configurations and urban design. *Estimated time: Debate time.*

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³ Based on the research lines of authors such as Kevin Lynch, Aldo Rossi, Leon Krier, Gordon Cullen, etc.

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